



The Virginia Saltwater Review

Plans and Statistics Department
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by

Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division

OVERVIEW



Citation Speckled trout (6 pounds, 6 ounces) caught by Wayne Smith of Gloucester. Photo courtesy of Jerry Thrash.

Striped bass and speckled trout (see picture) have been in the news these past two weeks, along with a good mixed bag offshore between deep-dropping for tilefish and working closer inshore for king mackerel. The cold snap is back upon us, however, this should enhance the movement of some larger striped bass down the bay toward the ocean. Maybe a weekend double is your plan this weekend, venison on Saturday and striped bass on Sunday.

Reminder to all our tautog fishers. If you land your fish at one of the five locations noted on page 5 (the Marine Sportfish Collection Project sites), please fillet your fish, keep the carcass, head to tail, intact, and donate it. In return, you will receive a hat or tee-shirt for a donation in any month. If you can provide the weight on the form (be sure to fill it out completely, including location of catch), that would be very beneficial to the ongoing biological work with tautog.

The last edition of the Saltwater Review, for the 2008 fishing season, will be printed on the 5th of December.

And now, the fishing reports!

THE FISHING REPORT

Wachapreague

At Captain Zeds, there was a nice run of small flounder in the area before the poor weather set in. The Bull's Head area (at day markers 133 through 137), Green Channel, and the Hummock were all productive for flounder. A few sporadic striped bass and grey trout have been reported as well.

Cape Charles

At Chris' Bait and Tackle, staff reports that high winds have kept many boats from going out lately. When the weather cooperated, there were reports of striped bass caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel averaging about 20 pounds.

Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel

Anglers have been catching their limits of striped bass at the Monitor Merrimac Bridge Tunnel, according to staff at Sunset Boating Center. While there were no citations, there were plenty of fish in the 28- to 29-inch range.

At Salt Ponds Marina, anglers have been finding striped bass at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Bad weather has kept many boats from going out.

Last week at the York River Fishing Center, a speckled trout citation was reported. When the weather calms down, anglers are finding plenty of striped bass.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

Rockfish are the top quarry now. There are a lot of school-sized fish available. The James River crossings are very productive and there are a lot of fish at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. More large fish are showing all the time. Slot-limit fish are being caught at the Monitor Merrimac Bridge Tunnel and the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. The largest fish are being caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel in the areas of the 3rd and 4th islands and at the high-rise section. A number of fish have been caught measuring in the 44- to 45-inch range. The first reports of large fish at the Concrete Ships occurred this week. Not a lot of fish yet, but the eel drifters have caught some 40-plus inch fish in the area. Reports from our north are fantastic. The best speckled trout action in history continues. The bite has been good all along the western shore of the bay from the Mobjack Bay area on around to Rudee Inlet. Rudee Inlet and the Elizabeth River have been particularly hot with a lot of large trout caught. Tautog are being caught on all of the structures inside of the bay. The largest tautog are being caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The near-shore wrecks are holding sea bass and still some triggerfish. Flounder are also being caught around these structures. The Triangle Wrecks have been an active area over the past couple of weeks. Flounder, sea bass, and large bluefish are being caught, and there has even been a bluefin tuna encounter or two. The bluefish have been huge with many of these fish in the 20-pound class. Offshore fishing out of Virginia has been almost non-existent. There are some bluefin tuna and a lot of false albacore on the Hot Dog. There probably are bluefin on the Fingers, but I have not heard of anyone looking for them. Tilefish and sea bass are available to offshore bottom fishermen. Yellowfin tuna action is rather good out of Oregon Inlet. The king mackerel bite out of Hatteras is very good.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

The primary driving force on the fishing scene lately is the relentless weather. The fish seem ready and willing, but anglers are having a tough time reaching them. Therefore, many are resorting to an inshore fishing itinerary. And with the ongoing speckled trout run, not many are complaining. The fish are active in the shallows of the southern section of the lower Bay and rivers, as well as in the surf line. Surf

anglers are pulling keeper fish from the wash near the Sandbridge pier on grubs and cut bait. Most of the larger fish are coming from the Elizabeth River and Rudee Inlet, but Lynnhaven is also giving up some respectable fish lately. Richard Stell of Virginia Beach lucked out when he hooked a hefty six-pound, 11-ounce speck fishing in the Broad Bay section of Lynnhaven, while Randy Price of Norfolk scored with a nice seven-pound, 13-ounce bruiser from the Elizabeth River on a Mirrolure. There are several fishing methods used for targeting speckled trout, and all techniques are producing lately. But many are finding especially good luck with trolling this week. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are still active in these same areas, but the action slowed up this week. Surf anglers are reporting some quality fish coming from the surf along Cape Henry, and down to Sandbridge.

Everyone is watching the striped bass scene. Although the really big fish are still to the north, anglers are still enjoying some decent striped bass encounters, with the northern-most islands and the high rise segment of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel giving up the biggest fish. Eeling is becoming more effective from the high rise to the Cape Charles areas. As the waters cool, this method will likely continue to produce the larger fish. Surf casters are enjoying great action from the shoreline near the Lesner Bridge in Lynnhaven Inlet, where 2-ounce jig heads adorned with bubblegum colored “Zoom Super Fluke grubs” are the ticket. Plenty of school sized fish are also available at the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel and the Monitor Merrimack Memorial Bridge Tunnel. Trollers are also scoring with fish to 42-inches fish near the mouth of the bay and Cape Henry.

The bay water tautog action continues to sizzle. Anglers are enticing limits of keeper fish from lower bay wrecks and bridge structures with blue crabs (if you can find them), clams, and mussels. One boat caught 25 fish up to 6 pounds in a little over an hour fishing along the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel recently, while another boat reported catching their limit of decent togs using quartered frozen crabs fished over a small “hang” at the mouth of the bay. Tautog on the offshore wrecks are also becoming more active.

Flounder action was good on the offshore wrecks when boats could reach them. This trend could heat back up once the winds subside. Nice seabass are also available on these same structures, along with a smattering of grey triggerfish. There is a good chance chopper bluefish are still circling the Triangle wrecks, but they are also moving into more inshore structures. Choppers were caught near the Chesapeake Light Tower recently. Although no word of any boated fish, bluefin tuna are a possibility from the Light Tower out to the inshore sea mounts. Deep droppers can also find good numbers of decent blueline tilefish and nice seabass in depths of 300 feet of water or more.

If a decent weather window presents, there is warm water within range, but few boats will make the run. There is a chance for yellowfin tuna, longfin tuna, and bluefin tuna. Swordfish are also a good possibility for those venturing to the deep for an overnight trip.

Virginia Middle Bay

Weather has been uncooperative lately, but Roger, with Jett’s Hardware, and Dan, with Smith’s Point Marina saw good action last Sunday with the Casey Neal Rogers Memorial Tournament. Seventy-six boats participated with over 1,000 pounds of striped bass being brought to the scales with a 50-pounder winning the tournament.

Tommy, at Garrett’s Marina, has seen good action on striped bass. People had a lot of luck over the past month

casting for stripers in the area, with the mouth of the Potomac River being productive. Other successful areas included buoys 8 and 10 in the Bay as well as the artificial reefs in the area.

Captain Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, reported the following:

Schooling stripers varying in size from 16 to 24 inches have been common recently on moving tides at the Hole-in-the-Wall, Windmill Bar, and in Fleets Bay above the bar. Most of the activity dies with the tide. A few scattered big fish in the 40-inch range have been caught, but these fish are isolated and not in schools yet. Chilly nights should bring great striper fishing in the next week or so, with big fish to come by Thanksgiving. Storm-type lures fished on bottom bouncing rigs are working, as are bucktails with grubs or shad. Recently, speckled trout have been showing well with multiple citations. A 27-inch, 6-pound, 6-ounce speckled trout was caught in Mobjack Bay last week.

Virginia Beach

At the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, very few have been able to go out due to weather. A lot of speckled trout citations have been reported out of Rudee Inlet. Anglers are also catching numerous striped bass up to 30 pounds. Staff expects the cool weather to bring in the large striped bass. During the last offshore trip, yellowfin and blackfin tuna were reported.

Outer Banks, NC

Recent weather has been poor for anglers in general with lots of wind and cold weather. When the weather did cooperate, anglers found decent catches. Water temperatures in the surf were in the upper 50's, but expect that to drop a few degrees with the recent weather patterns.

Offshore fishing was good with dolphin, wahoo, and king mackerel keeping the trollers happy, while blueline tilefish were biting for the deep droppers. Billfish catches dropped off while amberjack were around in low numbers. People fishing closer to shore saw improvements with large striped bass. Surf and pier anglers saw more bluefish, red drum, and speckled trout than any other species. Inshore anglers saw increases in striped bass around Mann's Harbor and speckled trout around the bridges.

South of Oregon Inlet, surf fishermen had to deal with rough seas as well. Sea mullet were caught around ramp 43 and on the north and south beaches. Bluefish were at the Point with a few large drum thrown in as well.

Offshore fishing out of Hatteras Inlet was blown out for the last few days. Fish that were caught before the current weather pattern set in included king mackerel and blackfin tuna. Inshore fishing included the usual fare for this time of year—red drum and speckled trout.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's [THE SALTWATER REVIEW](http://mrc.virginia.gov/swr/saltwaterreview.shtm) as the source of the fishing information.












ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!

THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

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*You catch it, you fillet it,
but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,
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The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA		RED DRUM	
SHEEPSHEAD		BLACK DRUM	
SPADEFISH		TAUTOG	
TILEFISH		GROUPE	
KING MACKEREL		SPANISH MACKEREL	
BLUEFISH (OVER 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)			

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT, FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH of the DONATION.

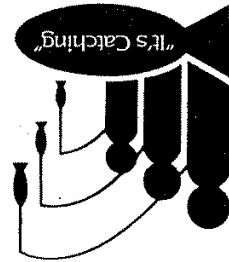
Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:
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